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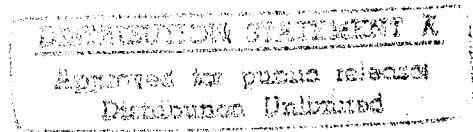
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FORCIBLE ENTRY - THE PURPLE LIE?!

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of

FORCIBLE ENTRY - THE PURPLE LIE?!

Altered by the perceptions and "lessons" of the Gulf War, the American way of war largely disregards the concept and importance of forcible entry. However, to a nation with global responsibilities and interests, forcible entry is the CINC's principle tool to gain access, introduce forces and perpetuate influence. From the perspectives of suitability, acceptability and feasibility, only the amphibious forces of the Navy-Marine Corps possess the inherent flexibility, muscle, responsiveness and self-sustainability to successfully execute a forcible entry in a high risk, unpredictable environment. Capitalizing on speed, flexibility and the momentum generated by power projection, the Marine Corps' latest warfighting philosophy, Operational Maneuver From the Sea, adapts the tenets of maneuver warfare to maritime operations. The future feasibility of amphibious forcible entry and OMFTS is predicated upon the ability to overcome tactical deficiencies and re-orient present thinking to embrace operational art. Innovation, insight, investment and vision prevent a very fragile forcible entry capability from becoming *the purple lie!*

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## **Forcible Entry - The Purple Lie?!**

**"Casualties, many; percentage dead, unknown; combat efficiency, we are winning!"<sup>1</sup>**

**D-Day Sitrep  
Tarawa, 20 November 1943  
LTCOL David M. Shoup, USMC**

**Tarawa, the antithesis of amphibious warfare, and the images of like battles, may have irrevocably altered the direction, focus and mindset of future military operations and options. On that tiny volcanic island the size of New York's Central Park, 6,000 dead Japanese and Americans stood as a testament to courage, determination and perhaps the futility of an amphibious assault. For the first time, camera crews relayed the horrifying realities of an opposed amphibious landing to a shocked nation. However, the Navy-Marine Corps team believed that if amphibious doctrine worked there, it could work anywhere. "Tarawa proved to be attrition warfare at its worst - undermanned, frontal assaults launched in broad daylight against a fortified enemy whose position had been scarcely damaged by a hasty bombardment."<sup>2</sup> The Japanese boasted that "one million Americans could not take Tarawa in 100 years"; Second Marine Division secured the island in 76 hours. The strategic significance of the victory and the efficiency of its attainment escaped a citizenry, congress and military establishment focused only on the tremendous "cost", measured in American lives:**

**"These frontal assaults by the Navy, as a Tarawa, are a tragic and unnecessary massacre of American lives"<sup>3</sup>**

**Gen. Douglas MacArthur, USA 1943.**

**"Large scale amphibious operations would never again occur"<sup>4</sup>  
Gen. Omar Bradley, USA, 1949.**

**Almost fifty years later, the Gulf War has replaced World War II as the model for the conduct of modern warfighting. The U.S. envisions tomorrow's campaigns as quick, "clean," high tech and decisive. Planning, support and execution of all efforts will be joint and combined. Host allied nations will provide an adequate infrastructure of ports, roads, and airfields to allow for the theater introduction of American military might. With sufficient time to marshal its strength and validate its plans, a U.S. led coalition will strike at a time and place of its own choosing. Decisive battles will be waged in the skies and on land. Above all else, friendly casualties will be minimal. And, of course, CNN will dutifully report the progress and success of each phase of the operation. For the Marines and sailors of Amphibious Task Force 156 this redefined American way of war negated an amphibious assault into Kuwait and Iraq.**

**To the Navy-Marine Corps team, U.S. combatant commanders and the American people, the Gulf War model and the American way of war seemingly discounts the amphibious assault and, more precisely, the concept of forcible entry as operationally viable or necessary! Forcible entry has become analogous with poor planning, flawed execution and high casualties. The military community largely ignores the concept and when discussed, hushed tones characterize the negative connotation and sinister nature of such thinking. Manuals and approved doctrine avoid the term and disavow the philosophy. Jargon and thought processes have adopted a more "politically correct" syntax: enabler, follow-on forces and preposition replace forcible entry; amphibious has been "modernized" with expeditionary; airland**

assault supersedes airborne assault; and operations other-than-war and regional conflict have been substituted for "enemy." Simply, forcible entry has no place in a CINC's or Joint Task Force Commander's (JTFC's) mission, concept of operations and operational thought process *or does it?*!

This paper addresses the issues and relevance of forcible entry as a viable concept for today's commander at the operational and strategic levels of war. In the absence of approved joint doctrinal publications, the concept of forcible entry will be defined and described within the parameters of theory and application. Next, the service strategy and operational roles prescribed by law and practice will be examined and analyzed from the perspectives of suitability, feasibility and acceptability. Service doctrine and advertised capability will be compared with the reality of today's threats and challenges. Conclusions will focus on the viability of forcible entry, particularly from an amphibious introduction. The analyses should ultimately demonstrate that the statements of MacArthur and Bradley as well as the post-Desert Storm, American way of war are generally inaccurate, shortsighted, and lacking an appreciation of service capabilities and a vision for the directions of warfare.

Contrary to the ill-conceived notions that permeate the military establishment, forcible entry is not only relevant, but critical to strategic policy makers and operational commanders. Without a viable forcible entry capability, the vast military potential of the U.S. is ineffective and impotent. Rear Admiral Joseph C. Strasser, President of the Naval War College, points out that the utilization of the Gulf War as a model for future war is fundamentally flawed. "To assume that the U.S. will enter

future conflicts on invitation, deploy large forces through a modern in-country infrastructure unopposed and have the luxury of a six month build up..."<sup>5</sup> disregards the reality of the world situation. This warfighting model further downplays the vital role of naval forces, historically the great enabler of land and air forces and protector of lines of communication and reinforcement. In today's world of shifting alliances, uncertain enemies and third world instabilities, a modern available port and airfield infrastructure simply cannot be relied upon. The nation and a warfighting CINC need the ability to gain access and perpetuate force. A forcible entry capability provides the CINC with the key to open the door and, if required, to knock it down.

The very tenets of our National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy-deterrence, forward presence and crisis response are predicated upon a national capability of forcible entry. A force, possessing sufficient combat power to directly intervene (or "enable" a resolution) on the behalf of vital U.S. interest, that is forward deployed or legitimately responsive to a potential crisis, represents the strongest of conventional deterrents. An effective forcible entry capability transmits a clear message - the U.S. is ready and capable of strong global reach and influence. The ability to project power in the form of ships and aircraft, though powerful symbols of deterrence, is not enough; credible deterrence ultimately resides with the American military's ability to introduce ground troops. Soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines on foreign shores, with or without an invitation, establishes serious resolve and intent. The necessity of maintaining a credible forcible entry capability is much more than an

important military tool - forcible entry is essential to the nation's global responsibilities and international interests.

Joint Pub 3-18, Joint Doctrine For Forcible Entry Operations (Draft), defines forcible entry as "seizing and holding a military lodgement in the face of armed opposition."<sup>6</sup> A lodgement is simply a designated area in a hostile territory that allows for the introduction of follow-on forces. The operational applications of a forcible entry include a coup de main (Operation Just Cause), noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO), the initial phase of a campaign or major operation (seize an air head or beach head), and a major operation within a campaign (Operation Chromite). By service doctrine and law, four tactical actions generate the combat power and possess the inherent mobility and self-sustainability to satisfy a forcible entry - amphibious operations, airborne assault (parachute), airland assault (land troops on the objective) and air assault (helo on the objective). The distinct phases of a forcible entry are characterized by: a rapid transit or deployment to the area of operations (AO); isolation of the AO; a violent, decisive assault; stabilization of a lodgment; and the introduction of follow-on forces or the transition to follow-on operations or operations other-than-war. The introduction of sufficient combat power to secure a lodgement or evict a determined enemy is by nature a high risk operation. Success in terms of objectives attained, strategic or operational, and minimal casualties demands a close linkage to operational art. The effective synchronization of all available assets in respect to purpose, time and space and the synergistic effects of those joint forces to generate an overwhelming force to wrest the initiative from



the enemy and defeat them in detail is the essence of opart. Thus, the evolving nature of forcible entry "doctrine," a seemingly recent innovation, translates to a re-examination and re-addressal of amphibious operations and airborne operations and the application of operational art!

By law, historical precedent, and service doctrine, the nation advertises that two forces possess the flexible combat power, sustainment, command and control (C<sup>2</sup>) and responsiveness to prosecute a forcible entry - the Navy-Marine Corps' amphibious operations and the Army's (-Air Force) airborne operations. The operational commander, the CINC or JTFC, must understand the capabilities and limitations of each type of operation. When considering the central importance of forcible entry operations and the unpredictability of armed conflict-

"no other human activity is so continuously bound up with chance,"  
Clausewitz, On War

selecting the right tool to get the job done is critical to the success or failure of the campaign and the credibility of the nation. The base requirements are to select a force that is strong enough to accomplish a multiplicity of objectives, capable of independent operations and possessing the self-sustainment to ensure its survivability for the duration of the operation. An analysis of the capabilities and limitations of each operation type reveals the viability of forcible entry from the sea or air. Clearly, there is a "force of choice".

**"On a superficial view, airborne forces may appear to be a better counter, as being quicker to arrive. But their speed of strategic movement, and effect on arrival are subject to many limitations"<sup>7</sup>**

**B.H. Liddell Hart**

The utilization of airborne forces requires the operational artist to continuously reassess the issue of acceptable risk. Hailed as the nation's "strategic trump card" and simultaneously derided as "costly luxuries of marginal utility,"<sup>8</sup> airborne forces provide a JTFC with the flexibility to quickly secure installations, reinforce, demonstrate resolve and expand the battlefield. Employment of airborne assault and air assault forces is not contingent upon an infrastructure, or slowed by seabased obstacles. Strategic lift ensures a rapid global response, capable of a delivery that bypasses enemy positions. Airborne operations capitalize on surprise, maneuver, objective and mass. However, airborne operations are restricted in scope and duration, requiring an early linkup with a more powerful force. Once separated from their source of deployment, airborne forces lose their operational tempo, momentum and flexibility; the limited firepower and sustainment that characterizes such operations subjects the soldiers to enemy interdiction and heavy casualties. Mechanized and armor attacks, capabilities present in even the most underdeveloped of third world countries, are particularly devastating to parachute and helo assault. Airborne forces exert a precise influence quickly, but their ability to maintain it or refocus on a rapidly evolving situation relegates their employment in forcible entry to a supporting role. In regards to forcible entry, airborne operations are simply not feasible, suitable or acceptable. A tackhammer rarely suffices when the job demands a sledgehammer!

**"No other force in the U.S. inventory possesses the combined forcible entry capability, combat power and staying power of seabased Marine forces"<sup>9</sup>**

The Navy-Marine Corps team provides the nation with a credible and viable forcible entry capability. Powerful, flexible, responsive and self-sustainable, amphibious forces operate without the constraints of basing or overflight considerations. The National Security Act of 1947 and Title 10 of the U.S. Code charter the Marine Corps to possess a forcible entry capability "to seize and defend advance naval bases or conduct such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign."<sup>10</sup> Employment objectives for amphibious operations, ranging the full spectrum of military objectives from securing a lodgement to a strategic coup de main, are made possible by the four "flavors" of amphibious operations - the assault, raid, demonstration and withdrawal. The Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) concept of warfighting provides the CINC or JTFC with the right tool for the right job; each MAGTF is a task organized, self-contained, complete combat package, consisting of headquarters, combat service support, ground combat and aviation combat elements uniquely tailored for each mission and enemy situation. The vital linkage with the Navy guarantees the Marines strategic mobility, protection enroute and while ashore, access to a vast sea line of communications, and operational support from all dimensions of modern warfare - land, sea, air, space and C<sup>2</sup>W. Joint by doctrine, amphibious forces are prepared to fight alone or along side sister services and coalition partners. "Throughout the 20th century, Marine Air-Ground Task Forces

placed ashore initially as enabling forces have fought and contributed decisively in every major ground conflict."<sup>11</sup>

Critics of the amphibious assault and the concept of forcible entry viewed the absence of an amphibious landing during Operation Desert Storm as a harbinger of such operations in the era of modern warfare. Tactical impediments such as the threat of armored interdiction, mine warfare, sea-skimming cruise missiles and shoulder fired anti-aircraft missiles further exacerbated the challenges of an opposed landing. Contrary to the skeptics' logic, the anticipated threat of an amphibious assault by the Marine brigades effectively eliminated 10 frontline Iraqi divisions (six infantry, two armored, two mechanized) from the war; 17,000 Marines neutralized 80,000 Iraqis without firing a shot! From October 1990 to February 1991, Fourth Marine Expeditionary Brigade conducted 13 well-publicized, over-the-horizon (OTH) exercises at distances of 25 to 72 miles and feints off the coasts of Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, demonstrating to the world and to the enemy, the potential of an amphibious assault. Within a 24 hour period, the amphibious task force (ATF) could strike with a devastating combined arms assault at any point along a 600 mile coast. However, the availability of an adequate theater infrastructure from which to generate combat power and the rapidity of the MARCENT ground advance negated the need for a landing. If anything, the effect of the ATF's presence during the Gulf War and its significant contribution to the coalition victory validates the viability, relevance and necessity of maintaining a credible amphibious forcible entry capability; "even without

a landing, an amphibious capable naval force, lurking offshore can so diffuse and distract an enemy that its presence alone may be decisive."<sup>12</sup>

To enhance credibility, maintain focus of effort and guide the future direction of amphibious operations and forcible entry, the U.S. Marine Corps has embraced operational art. The Corps' "latest" philosophy for warfighting, Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS), adapts the tenets of maneuver warfare to maritime operations and seeks to maximize technological superiority, rapid decision making, dominance of the sea and the versatility of U.S. naval forces to avoid an attrition style head-on attack and break the cohesion and integration of enemy defenses.

"OMFTS offers the ultimate marriage between economy of force and mass. While the sea protects our front lines and flanks, we can project all of our power at the time and place of our choosing."<sup>13</sup>

C.E. Mundy, Commandant of the Marine Corps

The sea is viewed as an unlimited maneuver space from which there is a transition ashore without loss of momentum. OMFTS espouses a high tempo, seamless, rapid projection of power over a broad area from over the horizon. The traditional operational pauses of ship-to-shore movement are eliminated by ship-to-objective movement. A sea based sanctuary allows forces to concentrate, limits reliance on a fragile infrastructure and provides protection for the support base. Swift, violent and simultaneous attacks by joint sea, air and amphibious (land) forces win battles by placing strength against weakness to achieve critical objectives faster and more decisively than the enemy can react.

"The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know when I intend to give battle, he must prepare in a

great many places ... And when he prepares everywhere, he will be weak everywhere" Sun Tzu, The Art of War

OMFTS is not a single technique or a doctrinal solution, but a compliment to existing practices, offering a flexible focus and alternatives to the nation, a theater CINC and a joint task force commander.

The direction and implications of OMFTS for the forcible entries and the amphibious operations of tomorrow are clearly suitable and acceptable; the current feasibility of OMFTS is a far different issue! To generate the momentum, tempo and speed across a broad frontage and throughout a deep battle dictated by the applications of maneuver style warfighting of fully integrated joint forces places demands on capabilities that do *not* exist or will *not* exist in the *near* future. Glaring deficiencies threaten the present execution of an amphibious forced entry and the future of OMFTS:

> > Mobility. The most critical requirements of OMFTS are high speed surface craft and helicopters which must be able to deliver Marines to objectives ashore before an enemy can respond. An amphibious assault vehicle (AAV) must be fast and survivable in both water and on land. The AAV (advanced amphibious assault vehicle) presently under development is not the solution. The V-22 appears to be appropriate fix for the Marine Corps medium troop lift requirement, but the slow acquisition has Marines asking when and how many? At present, the AAV and CH-46 lack the range, speed and lift demanded by maneuver style warfighting.

> > Mine Countermeasures. The Gulf War demonstrated the effectiveness of this potential show stopper. Current doctrine emphasizes prevention, mine avoidance

and risk acceptance. The requirement for a rapid, in-stream breaching *and* clearing vehicle must be realized now.

> > Naval Surface Fire Support. The 5 inch gun has not been an adequate substitution for the 16 inch gun of the now defunct battleship. Precision guided munitions are too costly and do not produce the desired suppression. The development of a high volume, long range surface fire support system, capable of shaping the battlefield and protecting Marine landings, must become a top priority for littoral warriors.

> > Amphibious Shipping. Too little, too late, too old. This is a complex strategic issue that continues to befuddle Marine planners. The primary tactical warfighter of Corps, the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), cannot be adequately deployed aboard available assault amphibious shipping.

Three of the four deficiencies are tactical impediments; *all* have operational and strategic implications. Suitable systems are expensive and long term from an acquisition perspective. OMFTS demands radical innovation in mobility, mine countermeasures, fire support and strategic lift; simple replacements or upgrades of present systems will not support the philosophy. This dilemma is not just a Navy-Marine Corps problem, but a national challenge. Without the tactical means of execution, OMFTS remains a thought provoking concept. OMFTS is kept afloat today by "bandaids," promises and the innovation of the Navy-Marine team; this is not the optimal solution to a national requirement.

"To insist that the traditional forcible entry assault with its structure, doctrine and procedures is adequate for the future is to admit that amphibious warfare will remain nothing more than "beaching the whale."<sup>14</sup>

VADM J.B. LaPlante, USN,  
CTF156/AmphibGrp 2 Operation Desert Storm

Until OMFTS becomes a reality through the acquisition of the necessary "systems," Navy-Marine leaders and planners will continue to be challenged by maintaining and preserving the focus of the concept. Viable, relevant forcible entry operations demand a fundamental shift in the orientation and execution of today's approach to amphibious operations. This mental re-orientation must occur in four critical areas:

> > Amphibious doctrine. Developed in 1950s, present doctrine does not support OMFTS or even the OTH amphibious assault. The detailed, scripted, two dimensional frontal attacks of WWII amphibious warfare must be "transformed" to the flexibility, tempo and decentralized command and control dictated by maneuver style fighting. Staffs and commanders must be educated, trained and prepared to adapt to this evolutionary thought process.

> > Composite Warfare. "Forward From The Sea" states that the fundamental building blocks of naval forces are the carrier battle group (CVBG) and the amphibious ready group (ARG). Power projection, crisis response and deterrence requirements dictate *simultaneous* employment of both forces. Command and staff action must be fully integrated to optimize the strike capability and battle space dominance of the CVBG with the power projection of amphibious forces. VADM LaPlante writes that



"no staff (or flagship) is big enough or broadly competent enough to be CWC in a multi-threat environment and run an amphibious operation."<sup>15</sup>

> > MEU mentality. Constrained by a lack of adequate shipping and forces available (compliments of "right sizing"), the Corps is "stuck" with deploying a very limited forcible entry capability in its smallest, multi-mission MAGTF, the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). If the MEF is to be CINC's true 9-1-1 force in readiness, effective forcible entry demands that the *nation's* Marine Corps train, prepare and deploy to fight as a MEF. Sending a MEU with its limited "firepower" into harms way, believing that it has the key to open the door, threatens the very concept of amphibious forcible entry and American credibility.

> > Leadership. Forcible entry will always be a high risk business. OMFTS will never entirely eliminate the possibility of failures, but rather, it seeks to enhance the likelihood of success. Risk reduction and the management of risk characterize the military profession and the responsibility of leadership at every level. COL T. Gatchel, USMC (Ret.), former chairman, Operations Department, Naval War College writes:

"The most serious obstacle to a successful landing would be the collective loss of nerve today on the part of those who practice the art of amphibious warfare and their military and political overloads."<sup>16</sup>

The fate of the nation and the military depend upon a *feasible* forcible entry capability. Permanent fixes are long term and costly. However, by altering the focus of current philosophy, training and practice, the Navy-Marine Corps *could* provide a forcible entry capability - today!

At the time of this writing, instability within the Korean peninsula, the former Soviet states, Bosnia, the Persian Gulf, South America and the horn of Africa potentially threaten U.S. vital interests. The only certainty in America's future is that the continued "new world disorder" extols the need for a strong capable military which will not always be able to predict or choose the circumstances and timing of the next armed conflict. The instrument to ensure that the military is responsive and capable of "engagement and enlargement" is forcible entry. Several unifying themes are offered in summary:

The misinterpreted lessons of America's last war in regards to the role of naval forces and the viability of amphibious operations do *not* accurately portend the future.

Forcible entry is critical to the military's ability to project power and the nation's global responsibilities; forcible entry lends credence to deterrence, presence and crisis response.

Combatant commanders must understand the capabilities, limitations and character of forcible entry.

Amphibious forcible entry is the "tool of choice," providing the CINC (or JTFC) with the muscle, flexibility and sustainment to gain access, accomplish the mission and rapidly transition to the next phase or operation.

OMFTS provides the Navy-Marine Corps team a blueprint for the future. Tactical and strategic impediments threaten the future reality of this concept and the capability.

A re-orientation and focus on operational art and leadership will ensure that forcible entry remains a reality.

Feasible, acceptable and suitable, the concept of amphibious forcible entry is relevant and viable at every level of warfighting. Innovation, insight, investment and vision prevent a very fragile forcible entry capability from becoming *the purple lie!*

## NOTES

1. Alexander, p. 59.
2. Ibid., p. 61.
3. Ibid., p. 61.
4. Gatchel, "Battles, Alligators, and Flying Bananas", p. 62.
5. Strasser, p. 252.
6. Joint Pub 3-18 (Second Draft), p. I-3.
7. Liddell Hart, p. 62.
8. Gatchel, "Hang Together, or Hang Separately," p. 58.
9. FMFM1-2, p. 1-1.
10. FMFM1-2, p. 3-6.
11. Forward ... From The Sea, p. 7.
12. OMFTS, p. 4.
13. OMFTS, p. 3.
14. LaPlante, "The Future of Amphibious Warfare Takes Shape," p. 88.
15. LaPlante, "The Path Ahead for "Gators and Marines'", p. 34.
16. Gatchel, "Beetles, Alligators, and Flying Bananas," p. 63.

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